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### SW 515.01: Practice with Individuals and Families in a Community Context (Foundation Year)

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**SW 515 01 and 02 Practice with Individuals and Families in a Community Context  
Foundation Year Fall Semester**

**Professor: Janet L. Finn & Kerrie Ghenie**

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**Office Hrs: Tuesday 1-3**

**Class Time: Friday 1-5**

**Credits: 4**

**Prerequisites: Admission to MSW program or permission of instructor**

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This practice course builds on students' developing knowledge and skills of social work practice and explores their application in practice with individuals and families in the context of community. The course begins with critical inquiry into the concept of family and an introduction to an integrated approach to practice with families and individuals. We explore a range of theoretical, cultural, and historical perspectives on family and personhood and consider their relevance for justice-oriented interventions in the context of community. We examine diverse conceptual frameworks and practice models and consider their contributions to understanding individuals and families and engaging in processes of change. We continually link theory, practice, policy, and social work values as we explore the implications of diverse perspectives for grounded, concrete, community-based interventions. Students critically examine methods of assessment and intervention and findings in the literature on individual and family practice from ethical, cultural, and social justice perspectives. We will also examine the roles of community mediating structures in promoting the well-being and social participation of individuals and families. In addition we attend to the linkages of local and global issues and the international implications of family policies and practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**COURSE CONTENT**

Over the course of the semester students will develop basic competence in culturally grounded approaches to practice with individuals and families in a community context. To this end, students will investigate and assess various theories and models of family and intervention, critically explore the politics and ethics of practice with individuals and families, examine interplay of values, policies and practices, and commit to ongoing professional development and assessment of their own practice. Questions of meaning, power, difference, and inequality are central to this course. Students will consider ways in which cultural background, class positioning, racial, gender, and sexual identity, age, ability, and life experience of all parties (including the social worker) shape the social work relationship and the processes of change with individuals and families. Students will be introduced to a range of intervention models that are informed by the experiences of historically marginalized or excluded groups including people of color, women, persons with disabilities, and gay, lesbian and transgender groups.

This course helps prepare students to be researcher-practitioners capable of linking theory, practice, policy, and community context. It is designed to challenge assumptions and broaden understanding regarding differing meanings of personhood, family, and community. We consider the challenges these differences pose to our conceptual frameworks and practice models and explore possibilities for informing theory and practice. Themes addressed in the course include: a human rights perspective on practice; constructions of personhood, family, and difference; historical context of practice; families and globalization; assessment; families as partners in

action; grief and loss; spirituality; children and youth; kinship, culture, and intervention; violence, containment and control; and caregiving through the life course.

This course is interactive in nature with an emphasis on development of practice knowledge and skills through in-class activities and engagement with community practitioners. The course introduces students to a range of assessment tools that bring issues of gender, culture and power to bear on understanding personal strengths and struggles, family dynamics and assets, and community context and capacities. Class members will develop practice knowledge by utilizing these tools and critiquing their strengths and limitations in promoting individual, family and community empowerment. Working in small groups and in ongoing dialogue with community-based practitioners, class members will explore limits and possibilities of integrated, social justice-oriented practice with individuals and families.

### **RELATION TO OTHER COURSES:**

This course draws on the foundation knowledge of social work practice and human behavior in the social environment being developed in SW 505 and 510. It gives students the opportunity to reflect on and apply foundation knowledge in the context of practice with individuals and families. The experiential aspects of the course and the emphasis on community context of practice provides students grounds for knowledge and skill development related to the foundation practicum. This course provides a foundation in community context that will be developed in SW ???, and it provides students with an introduction to integrated practice, which will be developed in depth in SW ??? during the concentration year. SW515 also provides students an opportunity to link theory and practice through individually designed projects that will comprise part of the professional portfolio.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply skills of critical thinking to social work practice with individuals and families.
2. Articulate and uphold professional values, standards and ethics in practice with individual and families in community context.
3. Demonstrate understanding of dominant and emergent conceptual frameworks in social work as they relate to practice with individuals and families in community context.
4. Demonstrate understanding of diverse theoretical perspectives on personhood, family, and community and their differing implications for practice and utilize this knowledge to identify or formulate appropriate and effective interventions.
5. Critically evaluate the values and assumptions that underlie theoretical frameworks and the ways in which these frameworks influence intervention decisions.
6. Apply knowledge of cultural, political, and historical factors in shaping understandings of personhood, family, and community.
7. Demonstrate capacity to develop and carry out appropriate assessments with individuals and families, sensitive to and informed by social, political, and cultural context of practice.
8. Address issues of power, difference, oppression and discrimination as they relate to social work practice with individuals and families.
9. Engage in ongoing critical assessment of own knowledge, values, attitudes, and practice.
10. Demonstrate competence in listening and communication skills needed for effective engagement with diverse people and groups.
11. Demonstrate commitment to professional, valued-based practice with individuals and families informed by appropriate theoretical, empirical, and experiential knowledge

12. Demonstrate knowledge of assessment strategies and of value-based criteria for selecting approaches to assessment, intervention, and evaluation that promote individual and family strengths and empowerment.
13. Discuss the significance of an integrated practice approach to intervention with individuals and families
14. Identify strategies for promoting the meaningful participation of those affected in processes of individual, family, and community change.
15. Identify approaches to intervention with individuals and families that promote social and economic justice.
16. Critique social work literature on family practice in terms of assumptions about appropriate family structure and function and consider the implications for diverse family situations (e.g. solo parent, multigenerational, extended, and gay and lesbian families).
17. Conduct an assessment of community resources for family support and empowerment.
18. Identify community mediating structures and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting individual and family well-being and participation
19. Identify key social policies relevant to social work with families and discuss their implications for practice at the community level.
20. Discuss the concept of globalization and the challenges and opportunities for family-centered policies, practices, and development.

### **Course Texts:**

Briar-Lawson, K., Lawson, H., Hennon, C., & Jones, A. (2001). *Family-centered policies and practices: International implications*. New York: Columbia University Press (FCPP)

Kilpatrick, A. & Holland, T. (2003) (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). *Working with families: An integrative model by level of need*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (WF) (Optional text).

Course Pack of required readings.

### **Course Assignments:**

**Assessment from a Perspective of Difference:** Throughout this course we will be critically examining constructions of “normal” and “normative” beliefs, relations, and practices among individuals and families. Many assessment tools and models of intervention have been critiqued for assuming universal norms based on the experiences and beliefs of particular groups (often white, middle-class males). However, we have also seen the possibilities for challenging the limits and expanding the possibilities of practice by starting from a different perspective, for example, that of a solo mother, a gay man, or a poor, African American community. In this assignment you will explore an aspect of individual or family assessment from a perspective of “difference.” For example, what sorts of values and assumptions are encoded in frequently used family assessment tools? Are there particular beliefs about personhood or gender relations that go without saying? Are there particular assumptions about life-course development that may be challenged by differing social locations and experiences? How do they fit with the experiences of intergenerational, extended families, gay and lesbian families, or others who may differing understandings of kinship? What might the foster parent application and assessment process look like if it were developed from the perspective of the foster child?

How might the life story of a person who has experienced marginalization and oppression pose challenges to dominant assumptions about “problems” and intervention? We invite you to be creative. You may wish to approach this from first-hand experience or draw on autobiographical or fictional accounts about the collision of meaning systems in the “helping process” and its consequences. You may want to conduct an analysis of the cultural appropriateness of assessment tools and practices used in your practicum agency. We will take time in class to brainstorm other possibilities. The final product should be an 8-10 page typed, double-spaced paper. The paper is due November 1.

**Portfolio Project:** The social work portfolio is a compilation of materials that provide evidence of student’s knowledge, values, and competencies and ability to reflect on the practice of social work. Each class member will carry out one project related to the theme of practice with individuals and families in community context that will comprise part of his-her social work portfolio. The project is to be developed in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor. It should address one or more of the student’s individual learning goals and one or more of the SW 515 course objectives. The portfolio project may be carried out in conjunction with the Fall 2002 practicum placement. We anticipate that the portfolio projects will be varied, reflecting individual interests and objectives. Project possibilities include: preparation of a grant proposal for program development within a family service or advocacy organization; preparation of a literature review and annotated bibliography on best practices for a particular arena or modality of intervention; handbook or Power Point presentation for practicum in-service training; documentation of apprenticeship and evaluation of knowledge and skills in a particular individual or family practice model. These are only suggestions, and we invite you to be creative. Please turn in a 1-2 page project proposal by Friday October 18. The proposal should include a brief statement of the project, its relationship to personal learning goals and course objectives, plan and timeline for completion, and statement of support from faculty advisor. The final product is to be submitted by Monday, December 16, and time will be arranged for discussion and debriefing with your instructor. Note: the contribution to the portfolio may be a product that represents one phase of a larger project. For example, if you are interested in development and innovation in family resource centers, this semester’s project may consist of a literature review and assessment of best practices. The portfolio project constitute 25% of course grade.

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Week One 9/6: Introduction and Overview**

Integrating Personal Struggles and Social Issues

Locating ourselves in the process: where have we been, where do we want to go?

Getting acquainted and setting ground rules for classroom as arena for practice

Building classroom as community and community as classroom

Form project groups

Readings for Week One: FP 1, Witkin (1998), FP 2 Early & GlenMaye (2000), FCPP, “Introduction.”

#### **Week Two 9/13: Community, Family, and Personhood: Context, Meanings, and Power**

Theoretical overview

Introduction to the concept of social construction  
Family, personhood, and “positionality” – cultural and historical perspectives  
Identity, Belonging and Difference  
Problematizing the local and global  
“Meanings of Family”

Readings: FP 3, “Comparing Approaches, FP 4, Blundo (2001), FP 5, Rose (2000), FP 6, Deagan (1990). FCPP, Chs. 1 & 10.

### **Week Three 9/20: Histories, Visions, and Values**

Families as Social Welfare Institutions  
Difference and Pathology: The Making of Us/Not Us  
Values, Ethics, and Visions (Family and Values exercise)  
Questions of globalization  
“Culturally competent” practice?

Readings: FP 7, Mattison (2000), FP 8 Rhodes (1992), FP 9 Spickard et al (1996). FP 10 Rodriguez (2000), FP 11 Scheller (2000) FP 12 (2001). FCPP Ch. 2, pp. 50-65, and Ch. 11

### **Week Four 9/27: Conceptual Frameworks and Practice Models**

Diverse perspectives on families and interventions (cognitive, narrative, psychodynamic, solution-focused, strategic, structural, and systems)  
Linking theory and practice: class member presentations

Readings: FP 17, Hartman & Laird (1983), FP 18 Germain (1994); FCPP Ch. 2, pp. 66-75l Chs. 3 & 4. Suggested reading, WF, Chs. 7-12. Additional resources will be on reserve at Mansfield library.

### **Week Five 10/4: Dimensions of Assessment Part I**

The person in the process  
Traditional and alternative resources for individual, family and community assessment  
Assessing the assessment tools  
Considerations from a strengths perspective  
Guest speaker Evelyn \_\_\_\_

Readings: FP 14 Graybeal (2001), FP McQuaide & Ehrenreich 15 (1997), FP 16 Weaver (1998), FP 20 Congress (1994), FP 25 Tracy & Whittaker (1990), FP 26 McGill (1992).

### **Week Six 10/11: Dimensions of Assessment Part II**

Gender, power and family  
Feminist perspectives  
Family and Political Economy  
Policy-practice: gender, family and the implications of welfare reform  
Guest Speakers: WEEL in conjunction with Affilia mtg, and Dorothy Van Soest on Thursday pm talking about diversity and social justice

Readings: FP 19 Atwood (2001), FP 21 Laird (1996), FP 56 MacKinnon et al (2001) White & Tyson-Rawson (1995). FCPP Ch. 3 & 5.

**Week Seven 10/18: Action and Accompaniment: Families as experts and partners**

Social/family history and development  
Family centered policy-practice skills  
Family support models  
Family practice from a strengths perspective  
Family group conferencing  
Guest Speakers: Linnea Wang and Carmen Underwood

Readings: FP 13 Leon (1999), FP 27 Early (2001), FP 28 Walton et al (2001). FP 29 Love (2000), FP 30 Waldegrave (2000). FCPP Ch. 6 & 8.

**Week Eight 10/25: Loss, Grief, Separation, and Connection**

Global loss model  
Children, separation, loss and development  
Nurturing fragile ties  
Connections across generations  
"Multiple Transitions"  
Guest Speaker: Sandy Kraha

Readings: FP 31 (Edelstein et al (2001), FP 32 Weber & Waldrop (2000), FP 33 Whitley et al (1999), FP 34 Krane & Davis (2000), FCPP Ch. 7

**Week Nine 11/1: Family, Culture, and Spirituality**

Respecting belief systems  
Spirituality and personhood  
Tensions of church, state, and family  
Reflection on our own belief systems and their influence on practice  
Guest Speaker: Panel

Readings: Pellebon & Anderson (1999), FP 24 Schwarz (1997). FP 47 Gotterer (2001), WF Ch. 4. Recommended film: "The Smith Family"

**Week Ten 11/8: Children, Youth and Intervention: 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges**

Constructing adolescence as pathology  
Social construction of children, youth and "trouble"  
The history and politics of wraparound services  
Guest Speaker: Lynn Nybell, Eastern Michigan University

Readings: FP 38 Finn (2001), FP 39 Nybell & Williamson (2001), FP 40 Malekoff (2000), FP 41 Malekoff (1999), FP 42 Kisthardt (1992)

**Week Eleven 11/15: Cultural politics of Kinship: Adoption, Indian Child Welfare Act**

Adoption and the politics of kinship  
When meaning systems collide  
Power in the intervention process  
ICWA: Histories, tensions and possibilities  
Intersections with issues of international adoption: Race, class, nation  
Guest Speaker: Debra Rattler?

Readings: FP 35 Morris & Shepherd (2000), FP 36, O'Hagan, (1999), FP 37 Napoli & Gonzalez-Santin (2001). Additional reserve readings to be announced.

## **Week Twelve 11/22: Violence, Conflicts, and Containments**

Mandated clients and resistance  
Conflict, human agency and possibility  
Gender, power, and violence  
Humanizing spaces of containment  
Families and war  
Crafting places of hope  
Guest Speaker: Dyan Mazurana .

Readings: FP 50 Strenbach (2000), FP 51 Cingolani (1984), De Jong & Berg (2001), FP 53 O'Brien (2001), FP 54 Krane & Davis (2002), FP 55 Shepherd (2001).

## **Week Thirteen: Thanksgiving Holiday**

## **Week Fourteen 12/6: Caring Communities: Caregiving, participation, and empowerment**

Demographic shifts and implications  
Caregiving throughout the life course  
“Needs ”and rights: client vs. citizen  
People with (Dis)abilities – realizing a strengths perspective  
Living with and beyond chronic illness  
Accompanying the end of life  
Guest Speaker:

## **Week Fifteen 12/13 : Children and Youth in Families and Communities: Opening possibilities for empowering practice**

Beyond “risk” and “prevention” to participation and action  
Children and families as resources and community builders  
Promoting intergenerational engagement  
Reflections on the Learning Process  
Envision the future of local and global possibilities